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Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples

Dissemination of information on decolonization during the period from June 2003 to May 2004

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, in paragraph 2 of its resolution 58/110 of 9 December 2003, considered it important to continue its efforts to ensure the widest possible dissemination of information on decolonization and, in paragraph 3, requested the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat to take measures through all the media available, including publications, radio and television, as well as the Internet, to give publicity to the work of the United Nations in the field of decolonization. The present report, prepared in response to that mandate, covers the activities undertaken by the Department in the field of decolonization during the reporting period from June 2003 to May 2004.

2. The activities of the Department pertaining to decolonization continued to focus on coverage of the work of the General Assembly and the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, building partnerships with civil society through the network of United Nations information centres and strengthening the use of the Internet for the widest possible dissemination of information.

II. Coverage of issues before the General Assembly

3. The Department provided full and comprehensive coverage of the General Assembly debate on decolonization, including that of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) and of the 2003 session of the Special Committee. Special attention was devoted to the opening of the 2004 session

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of the Special Committee on 11 February 2004, including the statement by the Secretary-General, which was also issued separately as a press release.

4. The Department continued to publicize the work of the United Nations in the field of decolonization, with the issuance of 30 press releases, in English and French, on the relevant meetings of the General Assembly, the Fourth Committee and the Special Committee. These were all distributed electronically to the worldwide network of United Nations information centres.

5. The topic of decolonization was regularly included in the Department's guided tour of United Nations Headquarters and was included in the training of new guides and in the guides' daily briefings, as relevant. The map featured in the decolonization exhibit on the tour route was updated during the reporting period.

6. The Department responded to approximately 60 public enquiries about decolonization issues during the reporting period.

III. United Nations Radio and Television

7. The Radio Section of the Department of Public Information continued to cover various issues concerning decolonization and related issues in its daily news and current affairs magazine programmes, in both official and non-official languages, for worldwide and regional dissemination.

8. During the period under review, for example, the United Nations Radio's regional English news magazine "Caribbean News Round-up", carried numerous stories on decolonization. Topics covered included the statement by the Chief Minister of Montserrat to the Special Committee focusing on the challenges facing the Territory, the statement by a Cayman Islands representative in the same Committee noting how poorly it was being treated by the United Kingdom, and the unequal authority being exercised by the administering Power over Anguilla.

9. The Chinese language unit carried news stories on the celebrations of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the Secretary-General's remarks on the international year marking the 200th anniversary of abolition of slavery in Haiti. The Bangla news programme reported the Secretary-General's call for new ways to re-invigorate the decolonization process. The Swahili language unit reported on the Secretary-General's appeal for Morocco to accept the United Nations Plan for Western Sahara, the visit to Algeria and Morocco of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara, and the successful efforts enabling Western Saharan refugees to phone home.

IV. Publications

10. In issue No. 3, 2003, of the *UN Chronicle*, as well as the online edition,[1] "The United Nations Role in Western Sahara" details the Organization's efforts in the Territory over the years. Relevant resolutions on decolonization adopted by the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session have been posted on the online edition.

11. The brochure entitled "Decolonization: Questions and Answers", a joint project of the Department of Public Information and the Department of Political Affairs of the Secretariat, is to be published in English and French in April 2004.

The brochure was designed by the Design Unit of the Department of Public Information.

V. The Internet

12. The United Nations News Centre on the United Nations web site, which is now available in all official languages, continued to cover decolonization-related developments regularly. These stories were also disseminated through its e-mail news service in English and French to over 23,000 subscribers worldwide.

13. The Website Section, working in close cooperation with the Palestine, Decolonization and Human Rights Section of the Department of Public Information and with the Decolonization Unit of the Department of Political Affairs, updated the Decolonization site, adding more than 100 documents, press releases, reports and brochures each in English, French and Spanish. Following discussions with the Department of Political Affairs, that Department will now manage the site on decolonization in consultation with both the Website Section and the Palestine, Decolonization and Human Rights Section of the Department of Public Information. The Department of Public Information and the Department of Political Affairs are exploring the feasibility of expanding the site to Arabic, Chinese and Russian.

VI. Non-governmental organizations

14. The Non-governmental Organizations Section of the Department of Public Information continues to inform the large non-governmental organization community that works with the United Nations on issues related to decolonization on a regular basis.

15. The 56th annual Conference for Non-Governmental Organizations associated with the Department of Public Information held from 8 to 10 September 2003, on the theme "Human Security and Dignity: Fulfilling the Promise of the United Nations", featured a panel entitled "From Oppression to Empowerment" that explored the special history of the Organization with the ongoing process of decolonization and its impact on current events.

16. From June 2003 to 15 March 2004, the Non-Governmental Organization Section held briefings related to decolonization issues on the following topics: "Global security treaties: strengthening the rule of law" on 30 October 2003; "United Nations reform initiatives: the High Level Panel on Global Security Threats, Challenges and Change" on 29 January 2004; "Indigenous women — standing strong in a landscape of risk" on 5 February 2004; and "International Criminal Court: What's next?" on 11 March 2004.

VII. United Nations information centres and services

17. The global network of United Nations information centres, services and offices continued to promote the work of the United Nations in the area of decolonization.

18. During the reporting period, for example, the United Nations Information Service at Vienna reissued and disseminated all relevant press releases and public

information materials from United Nations Headquarters in the four countries i services (Austria, Hungary, Slovakia and Slovenia), especially targeting media an non-governmental organizations. Non-governmental organizations have a capacity to redisseminate information through their own web sites. Through its outreach activities, especially in the form of guided tours for visitors to the United Nation Office at Vienna (close to 50,000 visitors a year) as well as lectures and briefings the United Nations Information Service staff drew attention to the work of th United Nations in the field of decolonization as an area of achievement, and th Organization's recent work in Timor-Leste was highlighted as a relevant succes story.

19. The United Nations Information Service at Geneva organized pres conferences given by the Acting United Nations High Commissioner for Huma Rights, human rights special rapporteurs and representatives and other officials o issues related to decolonization and the right to self-determination. It issued pres releases of statements made by human rights officials on decolonization. It als reproduced and reissued press releases relating to decolonization received fro United Nations Headquarters. It posted these information materials on its web site.

20. The situation in Western Sahara and the United Nations Mission for th Referendum in Western Sahara continued to elicit media interest in Geneva particularly from a human rights standpoint — both civil and political rights, such a the situation of political prisoners and economic, social and cultural rights especially pertaining to the exploitation of natural resources. The Geneva pres corps also continued to show an interest in the post-colonial nation-building effor supported by the United Nations system in Timor-Leste.

21. The United Nations Information Service at Geneva highlighted decolonizatio in lectures organized for visiting student groups and in the guided tours for th public. As part of its educational outreach, the Service organized the annua Graduate Study Programme attended by 90 post-graduate students from all over th world. The three-week seminar included a briefing on the work of the Unite Nations in the area of decolonization.

22. The continuing work of the United Nations for decolonization was furthe disseminated through the local language web sites and newsletters of the Unite Nations information centres.

Notes

[1] www.un.org/Pubs/chronicle.